

The Horse Thief's Girl

By DONALD CHAMBERLIN

The human heart beats much the same among the good and the evil. This is a story of a girl, rough, uncouth, but an outlaw among outlaws, who made a sacrifice which, though in a bad cause, should entitle her to the name of heroine.

When the state of Colorado was a wild country, filled with wild people, a man there was who, starting under the title of road agent, degenerated to the condition of common horse thief. Human laws may be inherited, but they do not originate by accident. In a new country a horse or a mule is an absolute essential. Consequently one who steals a horse is given the greatest of all punishments. While a man may deliberately shoot down another in the street or over a card table and not be called to an account, the man who steals a horse is strung up to a tree by the neck.

Ryan was the only name known for the person who had slid down so far in the scale of crime. He had become such a thorn in the side of the settlers of the region he worked that they decided to drop everything else to run him down. It was a long chase, but at last they got him in a gulch the sides of which were unscalable. The mouth of the gulch was guarded by the committee. If there was any egress they did not know it. There was an outlet for a good climber near the upper end of the gulch, but in order to escape by that route the fugitive would have to expose his body to the fire of any one in the center of the gulch.

While the settlers were laying their plans for the capture they were approached by the girl who has been mentioned above.

"Ain' y' lookin' fer Ryan?" she asked.

Since she might be interested in Ryan's safety, she received no positive reply.

She pulled up the sleeve of her call-clo dress and showed some shocking marks on her arm; then she lowered it at the back of the neck and showed more of them.

"Ryan give me these," she said in a bitter tone.

"Are you his wife?"
 "T'm his gal. He came to our house
 onct when a posse was chasin' him.
 I hid him, and when he went away I
 went with him. And these scars air
 what I got fer what I done fer him.
 Do y' wonder I want to turn him in?"

The men of the committee looked at one another. This might be a case of a girl who had saved a desperado from death, had trusted herself to him and had received the reward that might have been expected from a hardened criminal. That she should desire revenge was not remarkable.

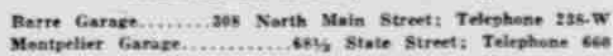
"See that rock up there?"
"The one next the big tree?"
"Yes. He's goin' to hide till after dark and then climb up there and git away. He's hidin' up near the head of the gulch. I'll go and tell him that y're comin' up to take him. That'll scare him so that he'll try to git over

The committee held a consultation. Some declined to trust the girl; some did not like giving up hanging the man instead of shooting him. But they all wished to be through with the job and get back home. So they told the girl she might as well and tell

She went off up the gulch muttering maledictions on the man who had returned evil for good. The men took position where they could get a good view of the rock and any one who at-

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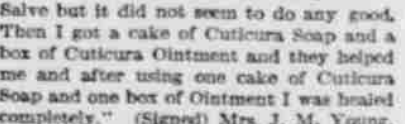
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so severe that I scratched and irritated the affected parts. I could not sleep and the trouble caused disfigurement for the time being.



...SON THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

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